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[Chaco Period] Terena

For carrying and storing foodstuffs the Terena used such containers as clay pots, calabashes, baskets, and netted bags. In their houses they also kept such tools and weapons as the digging stick, stone ax, club, spear, and bow and arrows. Materials for weaving baskets and bags were kept in corners, while dried meat, dried fish, skins of animals, and bags of vegetable foods hung from the rafters.

CLOTHING AND ORNAMENTS

Both men and women wore a cotton loincloth stretching from the waist to the knees, known as a *shiripá*. A shorter black *shiripá* was worn by men on war parties. During cold weather everyone wore a sleeveless cotton shirt, *repenóti*. In warm weather children went about unclothed. Both men and women used pentagon-shaped leather sandals fastened with a leather thong. All body hair, including eyebrows and pubic hair, was carefully pulled out with pincers. Hair was combed back over the head and fastened with a cord.

The Terena were fond of wearing necklaces, *nakóti;* bracelets, *imotáki;* and anklets, *imóheve.* These decorations were made by stringing dried seeds, animal teeth, and disks of shell and bone on a cotton cord. In later days, glass beads and bracelets and rings made from silver and even gold were used. During ceremonials the Terena used diadems made from red feathers and short skirts made from rhea feathers. Yellow parrot feathers could be used only by chiefs and usually signified that the wearer had killed an enemy. War chiefs wore, in addition, a robe made from jaguar skins.

Discussing the dress and painted designs of the Terena, Castelnau says:

> These Indians have no other clothes than a piece of cloth which they wrap around their kidneys, their hair is suspended at the back of the head and tied up to form a tail. Both sexes have the habit of covering their bodies with singular paintings, resembling those of the Guaycuru. Their designs are often excessively delicate and represent a harmony and delicacy which by no means can be described. [Ibid., vol. 2, p. 471.]

In connection with ornaments and body paintings, Castelnau adds the following:

> Here are glass beads which are fastened onto cotton cloths with wide stripes. There are scarlet feathers which are tied together and cut to make head ornaments; over there is a woman who is covering her husband's body with

beans, which they leave to take care of themselves. When they think that the crops ought to be matured, they send a messenger to find out. If these inspectors bring good news, they will return to their settlements and look after their fields. [Sánchez Labrador, 1910–17, vol. 2, p. 258.]

The first rains of the season, usually in late September or October, gave the signal for planting. Lands selected for cultivation were first cleared of trees, underbrush, and grass with an ax (originally made of stone but in post-Columbian times of iron). The trees and bushes were then burnt and the ashes scattered over the field. With a digging stick, *ilome'i*, made from the wood of the "palo santo," the cultivator would then dig the ground, squatting on his heels, moving from place to place until the field was turned. With the coming of the Spaniards the Terena claim they began to use iron hoes and even a simple iron-shod wooden plow drawn by oxen. After the field was prepared the Terena waited for the first rains before putting in the seed. "We waited," they say, "until the first flowers appeared on the trees."

The above information checks closely with what Sánchez Labrador observed in the middle of the eighteenth century:

The Chaná are a good-humoured, modest people. They have a peculiar way of cultivating the land. With the above-mentioned spades they dig and weed, not as the Spaniards do, but sitting down. Their spades have handles one and one-half yards in length. The Chaná sit down and work with their spades as far as they can reach and then move along until all the land has been prepared for planting. They cultivate manioc, maize, beans, squashes, sweet potatoes, tobacco, and some cotton. [Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 291–292.]

The economic unit was the family or household, which consisted of the husband and wife, the children, and, in some cases, the sons-in-law. The clearing and digging of the land were performed by men. Women and children assisted in planting, weeding, and harvesting. Cotton seeds, for instance, could be planted only by women.

The principal crops grown by the Terena were maize, sweet and bitter manioc, carâ, beans, sweet-potatoes, pumpkins, gourds, sugarcane, cotton, and tobacco.

Maize (soporó).—The Terena distinguished at least three kinds of maize: A long-eared yellow maize called *hianketi-soporó*, a white variety called *heopuiti-soporó*, and a mixed-colored ear called *kuati-soporó*. Maize was planted at the beginning of the rains and was ready for use 3 to 6

months later, depending upon the type and the conditions of rainfall. Fresh maize was roasted before a fire or made into porridge or into cakes called *shipa*. A fermented beverage was also prepared from newly harvested maize. Ears of maize were also dried and stored in the house to be later crushed in a mortar and used for making porridge.

Manioc (chupú).—While in the Chaco, the Terena cultivated both the sweet manioc, *eshóti-chupú*, and the bitter manioc, *suatí-chupú*. Manioc was planted at the same time as maize and was weeded to give the young plants a good start. Sweet manioc matured in about 8 months and bitter manioc in about 12 months. Bitter manioc was thus a valuable food reserve, as it became available during the lean months of September and October.

Sweet manioc was eaten boiled and baked or cut up and boiled with meat. Bitter manioc, however, had to be processed in order to rid the tubers of their poisonous acids. The tubers were first cleaned, then shredded with a wooden grater. The pulp was then rolled in a cotton cloth which was wrung with the aid of two sticks, one at each end of the cloth press. The pulp was then rolled into small cakes, *hihi*, or large cakes, *hapapé*, and baked until the bitter taste disappeared.

Sweetpotatoes (kohé).—The sweetpotato was a favorite food of the Terena and was planted in large quantities. The Terena recognized three varieties: A white variety known as *hepuiti-kohé*, a yellow variety, *hiati-kohé*, and a purple variety, *haraiti-kohé*. Although sweetpotatoes could be planted throughout the year, the biggest plantings were made at the beginning of the rainy season. Sweetpotatoes planted in October were ready for use in March.

Sweetpotatoes were eaten boiled, or baked on hot coals or in earth ovens. A hole in the ground was filled with wood and after the wood had burnt down to coals, the potatoes were placed in it, covered with soil and left for a day or two.

Maize, sweetpotatoes, and manioc were the staple subsistence crops of the Terena. In addition to being substantial foods, these crops became available for use over a period stretching from January to October. Maize came in from January to March, sweetpotatoes from March to July, manioc from August to October.

[Barra Village]

cold spells the people sit around fires in the early morning to keep warm. 357 513

Containers found in the houses are of the following types: 415

(1) Netted bags made from *yuki* fibers used for carrying and storing sweetpotatoes, maize, and other garden produce. Small bags are called *veri* and the large ones *nimaké*. These bags can be carried on the back or used as saddlebags. The mesh averages 4 inches and the size of the twine varies with the size of the bag, generally being about the size of heavy cotton fish netting. [286] [482]

(2) Round baskets of various sizes plaited from thin strips of wild bamboo or other wild cane. Some of the larger baskets have handles, so that they can be hung from a peg in the wall to keep dogs and chickens from taking the contents. [285]

(3) Large wide-mouthed clay pots for storing water, ranging from 1 to 4 gallons in content. These pots are made by the coil method and are unglazed and undecorated. It is reported that in the neighboring village of Cachoeirinha some of the Terena glaze and decorate these large pots. [323]

(4) Flat, glazed pottery dishes are also found. These are of a dark-red color, without decoration, and are used for serving food.

(5) Cast-iron pots purchased in Taunay are widely used for cooking food. [252] [439]

(6) Empty kerosene cans are always in demand for storing water and meal. Any empty can is readily accepted by the Terena.

(7) Calabashes of various sizes cut to form cups and ladles are used for many purposes. Chimarron or maté tea is drunk from calabashes. [824] [272]

(8) Flat iron pans about a yard in diameter are supplied by the Post for toasting manioc meal. [262] [439]

(9) Wooden mortars with wooden pestles for grinding dried maize or dried meat stand in every back yard. The mortar is a round block of wood about 3 feet long and 18 inches in diameter, hollowed out in one end to the depth of 8 or 10 inches. The block is set upright, and maize is placed in the hollow and pounded with a heavy wooden pestle about 3 or 4 feet long; a common sight every morning is to see women at the rear of the houses pounding out the corn meal or dried meat required for the day. 415 412 252

(10) In some houses a few porcelain cups, glasses, and table knives and forks are seen. 415

[Bananal village]

Such articles as axes, machetes, sickles, hoes, and weaving frames and material for weaving baskets and hammocks are usually found in the corner of the back room. Mats made from "piri" are found in some of the houses (such as were used in the Chaco days).

CLOTHING AND ORNAMENTS

At this point it is necessary to mention only the common everyday wearing apparel and the personal appearance of the Terena, as ceremonial dress will be described in the section on dances. In the village of Bananal all Indians wear European dress. The cotton cloth woven by the Terena forms only a small part of the material used for making their present-day clothing, as the Indians now buy the cheap cotton material offered for sale in the stores of Taunay, Miranda, and Aquidauana. After 30 years of mission training, it appears that all women can sew and eight sewing machines were observed in the village.

The general custom is for everyone to go barefoot. Only during "festas" are shoes worn by the more wealthy men and women, and even then people over 60 years old wear sandals made from hides or from old rubber tires. Shoes, like hats, are definitely in the category of luxuries.

For everyday wear, men use a shirt and a pair of trousers made from light-colored cotton material, usually with a faint stripe or check. No undershirt is used, but shorts are worn. Sport shirts worn over the shirt and outside the trousers are popular with young men. Some of the Terena men go about dressed in old Brazilian army uniforms which they received while serving in the army or which they have bought from others. During dances some of the young men wear suits made from cheap, tan-colored, cotton material. The young men also take great pride in being able to wear the baggy breeches and broadbrimmed felt hat of the "gaucho," or Brazilian cowboy.

Men have their hair cut in the modern style, and it is a common sight on Sunday mornings to see them cutting each other's hair in front of the houses. Although they wash their hair often, it is seldom combed. Men are usually clean-shaven, although a few wear mustaches; straggly beards are seen only on the very old men.

Women wear slips and dresses made from cheap cotton print of various colors. They do not wear coats, although hand-knitted sweaters are seen.

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coats, although hand-knitted sweaters are seen. Old women wear their hair long, parted in the middle and tied at the back of the neck with a ribbon or a piece of string. Young women who have been to the neighboring towns braid their hair and some even have permanent waves. The young ones also use face powder and lipstick. Locally made gold and silver rings and bracelets are worn, the bracelets often having the name or initials of the wearer engraved on them. Necklaces of store beads are in common use and one may still see a few old-fashioned necklaces made from small dried berries.

Children under 5 years of age go about unclothed except in cold weather when they wear a sleeveless shirt but no pants. Very young children are carried straddling the mother's hip.

Although the houses and cooking arrangements of the Terena do not appear to be exactly sanitary, the people themselves are clean and neat. In hot weather both men and women bathe every day. Clothes, even when worn and patched, are kept clean by constant washing. During any day of the week women can be seen at the stock water dams washing clothes.

AGRICULTURE

The agricultural practices of the Terena, today, conform closely to the methods employed by the "caboclo," or poor Brazilian farmer. The tools used, the crops grown, the methods of storing and preparing field produce for consumption are the same. In fact, the Terena have learned their agricultural methods by working on Brazilian farms. If any differences exist they arise from the greater efficiency of the "caboclo," resulting in larger areas cultivated, higher yields, and a larger reserve of food products. In the preparation of the land, the digging stick has given place to the iron hoe, and the stone ax to the machete and steel ax.

When a Terena wishes to prepare a field he looks for the type of soil and moisture conditions that are suitable for the crop which he wishes to grow. As the village of Bananal is on a plateau the soil tends to be rather sandy and dry, suitable for fruit trees and for manioc, which is a hardy plant. Surrounding the houses, therefore, are found orchards of mangoes, oranges, lemons, and bananas, and some manioc. The orchards are planted largely at the insistence of the Post manager. The mango

[Banana] Village]

later the field is weeded again with a hoe. After this weeding the manioc plant is strong enough to overcome the weeds and no more weeding is necessary. Sweet manioc takes 8 months to mature, and bitter manioc 1 year. Even then, mature manioc is left in the ground until required. 244 262

Sweet manioc is dug up as needed for daily use, the tubers being boiled or baked. Less often, boiled sweet manioc is mashed, made into cakes, and baked. Sweet manioc is also widely used in soups made with dried meat and onions. This latter dish is probably of Brazilian origin because one meets it in a "caboclo" hut as well as in a first-class hotel. 252 [177]

Bitter manioc, on the other hand, cannot be used until the poisonous acid is expelled. Bitter manioc is dug up by rows and processed. An Indian will say, "Today I am going to dig up two rows of manioc," which means that he is going to prepare a certain amount of manioc meal. In collecting manioc a man is usually assisted by his family, all carrying netted bags or large baskets and digging sticks. The stalk is pulled up and the dark brown tubers, ranging from 6 to 18 inches in length, are dug up and placed in the bags and baskets and carried home. At the back of the house the women clean the tubers, scraping off the loose dirt, small roots, and skin. The white tubers are now ready for grating. There are at least three principal types of graters. The simplest kind consists of a board with many nails driven through it so that one side is covered with spikes protruding about a quarter of an inch from the board. A woman then passes a tuber over the grater until it is reduced to shreds. Another type of grater resembles our kitchen grater, being a piece of tin with many holes punched through it, and is used in the same manner. A more efficient grater is made by covering a wooden cylinder with a sheet of tin punched full of holes. This roller is then fixed to the center of a special table and is turned by hand, the grated manoic falling into a vessel below. 252 244 252 412

The Terena no longer squeeze manioc pulp in a cotton cloth with sticks at both ends to give added purchase. Today, following the Brazilian custom, they put the pulp in a wooden press and squeeze out the juice, which contains a poisonous acid. The resulting semidry mass, called *hihi*, is first dried in the sun, then put through a rough sieve, and later toasted over a fire in a large iron pan. The meal, *yuna*, is then ready for use. It is eaten 252 [177] [262]

[P.24-B]